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By William J. Stevens

At the November 2005 General Membership meeting, Alex Ormston brought forward a motion, which was approved, that the Society request that the City of St. Catharines name the park at the intersection of Church and King streets the IODE park in recognition of the IODE's 100 years of service to the community. A letter was prepared by the Society president, who approached Councilor Dawn Dodge, and she agreed to put our request forward as an 'extra' at the November 28, 2005 City Council meeting. The request was received and forwarded to Parks staff for a report back to Council. At the December 12, 2005 City Council meeting, staff recommended that the park be named the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire / IODE Park. Councilor Dodge moved to accept the staff recommendation and the motion passed unanimously.

Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire / IODE Park Background

On April 28, 1902 a local chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E.) was organized and it was subsequently chartered in 1905. The local chapter was very active from the beginning. The chapter was instrumental in organizing the Niagara Peninsula Sanatorium and on October 19, 1909 the local chapter unveiled a tablet to commemorate the furnishing of the Consumptive Hospital, as it was first known. The Sanatorium was subsequently renamed The Shaver Hospital for Chest Diseases in more recent years.

In 1912 another chapter, the St. Catharines Municipal Chapter I.O.D.E., was chartered. This chapter was also very active from the beginning. Early minutes of the Chapter indicate that property was purchased from James M. McBride for the sum of \$1,700.00. A newspaper article in The Daily Standard, of September 30, 1913, indicates that the old frame structure formerly used by J. M. McBride as a planing mill has been

nearly all torn down to make way for a new park. This property was located at the gore of King Street and Church Street. On Dominion Day 1917, Mrs. Bessie Mulock (1868-1952), a charter member of the new chapter, presented the property to the City of St. Catharines. Mayor W.B. Burgoyne, accepted the gift on behalf of the City. The members wished the property to be designated as "Memorial Park", but this name, was given to the park on St. Paul Street, adjacent to CKTB Radio Station, and the I.O.D.E. lands simply became known as the King-Church Gore. The city continues to do a wonderful job of maintaining this downtown beauty spot.

1917 Presentation of the Park to the City.

(The following are excerpts from an article on the Events on Dominion Day in the July 3, 1917 issue of the St. Catharines Standard, page 3, column 4)

Another feature of the day's events was the presentation of the deed of the park at the junction of King and Church streets to the city from the City of St. Catharines Chapter I.O.D.E. The presentation took place in the pavilion shortly after the parade had disbanded. Mrs. Dr. Mulock as Regent of the Chapter made the presentation to Mayor Burgoyne. Mrs. Mulock referred to the work of beautification, which the Chapter had done, and how the lot at the corner of King and Church streets was purchased and beautified without using any or the Chapter's patriotic funds. To Mr. Robert Mills she paid tribute for his generous contributions to the beautification of the lot. Mrs. Mulock at the close of her address presented the Mayor with the deed to the lot. Mrs. Williams, Regent of the Municipal Chapter referred to the day as a great one in the history of Canada and remarked on the thousands of school children on parade and was of the opinion that the returned soldiers were glad to note the inspiration of the event and to see the children for whom they have been fighting. She congratulated Mayor Burgoyne upon being head of the city at such a notable time and gave a brief outline of the prosperity of the I.O.D.E. in this city and of the work, which the Society

is doing. She referred to the work of beautification undertaken by the St. Catharines Chapter and of the work for the soldiers and their dependents, which is being done by all the chapters. Mayor Burgoyne was deeply honoured to be the recipient of the beautiful lot and accepted it on behalf of the City Council. He congratulated the St. Catharines Chapter for their generosity and also spoke of the generosity of one of St. Catharines former citizens Mr. Robert Mills who donated liberally to the beautification of the lot. To St. Catharines His Worship referred as "The most beautiful small city in the Dominion," and the larger cities could perhaps be included. He congratulated the St. Catharines Chapter for having a large part in the beautific action of the city. And still he saw where much more could be done and which after the war and after our boys had returned victorious, would be accomplished. Members of the St. Catharines Chapter and other chapters of the I.O.D.E., His Honour Judge Campbell and Ald. Gray were among those who witnessed the presentation.

The IODE in St. Catharines Today

According to the IODE Canada web site, the mission of IODE, a Canadian women's charitable organization, is to improve the quality of life for children, youth and those in need, through educational, social service and citizenship programs.

The IODE was founded in 1900 by Margaret Polson Murray as Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire. The IODE, as the organization is now known, has changed over the years to meet the needs of all Canadians from coast to coast, with a particular focus on children and their needs. The name was officially changed to IODE in 1978.

In Ontario the IODE has over 4,000 members in 171 chapters. Membership is open to Canadian women of all ages, backgrounds and interests. In St. Catharines there are two chapters. The Earl Mountbatten Chapter, which was founded in November 1947 by Gertrude Millward. The William Hamilton Merritt Chapter was established on May 6, 1957.

Both chapters hold monthly meetings and new members are always welcome.